

Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4605
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: OTRA, ECON, EQUIP, TECH, SCUL, UR
SUBJECT: NOTES FROM ESTONIA

1. LOCAL OFFICIALS BLOCKED ONE KEY OBJECTIVE OF MY AUGUST 10-11 VISIT TO TALLINN BY REFUSING TO AUTHORIZE VISIT TO SHALE PROCESSING PLANT. (SECOND APPRECIATED CABLE ON SHALE INDUSTRY, EXPRESSING INTEREST IN TALLINN POWER PLANT, UNFORTUNATELY ARRIVED AFTER DEPARTURE FOR ESTONIA, BUT I DOUBT WOULD HAVE RECEIVED PERMISSION IF I HAD ASKED.) REQUEST TO VISIT LUTHERAN ARCHBISHOP HARDT (PHONETIC), REPORTEDLY NAMED ABOUT TWO MONTHS AGO TO REPLACE HIS DECEASED PREDECESSOR, WAS ALSO EFFECTIVELY STYMIED WHEN NO ONE ANSWERED PHONE NUMBER PROVIDED BY LOCAL OFFICIALS, OR DOOR OF WHAT APPEARED TO BE LUTHERAN CONSISTORY NEXT TO DOM CATHEDRAL. FINALLY, CITY PARTY COMMITTEE FIRST SECRETARY WAS ALLEGEDLY SICK, MAYOR KALLION WAS IN KIEV IN CONNECTION WITH FINNISH-SOVIET SISTER-CITY PROGRAM, AND ONLY CITY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE SECRETARY EDUARD PRAGI WAS AVAILABLE TO RECEIVE ME. FORTUNATELY, PRAGI WAS FAIRLY FORTHCOMING IN ANSWERING QUESTIONS ABOUT DEVELOPMENTS IN TALLINN SINCE MY VISIT LAST FALL, AND MY PROGRAM PRODUCED SOME OTHER INFORMATION

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AND OBSERVATIONS OF POSSIBLE INTEREST.

2. VISIT, UNFORTUNATELY, DID NOT THROW MUCH LIGHT ON PARTY DEVELOPMENTS. FOREIGN MINISTRY PROTOCOL OFFICER THOUGHT DESIGNATION OF FORMER FIRST SECRETARY KEBIN TO REPLACE DECEASED "PRESIDENT" VARDER WAS QUITE LOGICAL GIVEN KEBIN'S ADVANCED YEARS. AS ALLEGED "SENIOR" OF

THREE SECRETARIES, KARL VAINO WAS ALSO SEEN AS LOGICAL CHOICE TO SUCCEED KEBIN. COMMENT: IN FACT, OUR FILES INDICATE THAT SECOND SECRETARY K. V. LEBEDEV AND SECRETARY F. S. USHANEV ARE BOTH OLDER THAN VAINO, WITH USHANEV ALSO HAVING BEEN ELECTED EARLIER TO SECRETARY POSITION. BUT IF BOTH ARE RUSSIANS, AS NAMES SUGGEST, THIS WOULD PROBABLY DISQUALIFY THEM FOR SUCH PROMINENT ESTONIAN POSITION. IN THIS SENSE, VAINO COULD BE SENIOR AVAILABLE ESTONIAN.

3. MR. PRAGI WAS ASKED TO EXPLAIN SOMEWHAT SURPRISING STATEMENT IN REPORT ISSUED BY ESTONIAN CENTRAL STATISTICAL ADMINISTRATION IN JULY 26 SOVIET ESTONIA THAT "LOWERING OF PRODUCTION OF GAS FROM SHALE OIL, PEAT BRIQUETTES, EXCAVATORS, MINERAL FERTILIZER, BRICKS...SAUSAGE PRODUCTS... BY COMPARISON WITH FIRST HALF OF PREVIOUS YEAR WAS FORESEEN BY THE PLAN." IN EXPLANATION, PRAGI CLAIMED THAT:

(A) GAS FROM SHALE OIL WAS MORE EXPENSIVE AND LESS CALORIFIC IN ENERGY THAN NATURAL GAS WHICH IS NOW BEING RECEIVED DIRECTLY BY SAME PIPELINE FROM LENINGRAD, WHICH WAS ORIGINALLY USED TO PIPE SHALE OIL GAS TO LENINGRAD. GIVEN THIS FACTOR, PRAGI EXPECTED THAT DEMAND FOR GAS FROM SHALE OIL WOULD CONTINUE TO REDUCE. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE SAID, OIL FROM SHALE IS USED TO FIRE CENTRAL CITY HEATING SYSTEM. THERE IS AN OBVIOUS INCONSISTENCY HERE THAT NEEDS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FURTHER EXAMINATION BETWEEN TREND TO REDUCE SHALE OIL GAS AND STATEMENT IN AUGUST 1 SOVIETSKAYA ESTONIA THAT DURING (PRESUMABLY THEN RECENT) VISIT TO ESTONIA BY USSR MINISTER OF GEOLOGY KOZLOVSKIY "GREAT ATTENTION WAS DEVOTED TO PROBLEM OF INCREASING PRODUCTION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF UTILIZATION OF OIL SHALE";

(B) DROP IN PRODUCTION OF PEAT BRIQUETTES, MUCH FAVORED BY POPULATION OVER WOOD FOR STOVES, IS DUE TO FACT PAST TWO SUMMERS HAVE BEEN SO WET THAT THERE HAS BEEN PROBLEM IN DRYING THE PEAT;

(C) DEMAND FOR BOTH EXCAVATORS AND MINERAL FERTILIZERS IS INCREASING SO THAT ANY FORESEEN DROP IN PRODUCTION, PRAGI OPINED, WAS DUE TO CONVERSION TO SOME NEW FORM OF PRODUCTION TECHNOLOGY, E.G., IN CASE OF FERTILIZER, PERHAPS TO EASIER-TO-HANDLE GRANULATED PRODUCT;

(D) REGARDING REDUCED DEMAND FOR BRICKS, PRAGI EXPRESSED PERSONAL VIEW THAT BRICK CONSTRUCTION IS PREFERABLE FROM STANDPOINT BOTH OF DURABILITY AND "MICRO-CLIMATE" WITHIN BRICK BUILDINGS, BUT HE SAID THAT BRICKS ARE GIVING

WAY TO PRE-FABRICATED CONCRETE PANEL CONSTRUCTION;

(E) REDUCTION IN OUTPUT OF SAUSAGES WAS BLAMED ON INABILITY OF PLANT TO KEEP UP WITH DEMAND FOR SMOKED VARIETY; SECOND PLANT IS ACCORDINGLY BEING BUILT.

4. CRUNCH TO COMPLETE CONSTRUCTION BY TIME OF 1980 YACHTING OLYMPICS IS APPARENTLY GETTING WORSE. TALLINN NEEDS 30,000 MORE WORKERS IN ALL CATEGORIES FROM CONSTRUCTION TO SERVICE PERSONNEL FOR RESTAURANTS, LAUNDRIES, ETC., BUT CANNOT ATTRACT THEM, EVEN FROM COUNTRYSIDE WHERE MANY HAVE BEEN DRAWN BY NEW HIGH WAGES AND OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD

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OWN HOUSE. POLISH SPECIALISTS IN HANSEATIC-TYPE RESTORATION WILL PROBABLY COME IN SEPTEMBER TO WORK IN OLD CITY, BUT WHEN AND HOW MANY WILL APPARENTLY DEPEND ON TALLINN'S ABILITY TO PROVIDE COUNTERPART WORKERS TO HELP THEM. PRAGI CLAIMED THAT CITY AUTHORITIES DO NOT WISH TO INCUR IRE OF CITIZENS BY CUTTING BACK ESSENTIAL CONSTRUCTION TO FULFILL OLYMPIC PLANS. HENCE, IN CASE OF PRESENT PLANS TO CONSTRUCT FOUR NEW HOSPITALS WITH 1600 BEDS TO REPLACE OLD BUILDINGS, CITY HAS TOLD CONSTRUCTION TRUST TO SPEED UP WORK THIS YEAR BEFORE DEMANDS OF OLYMPICS MUST TAKE PRIORITY. 18-OR-SO STORY HOTEL TO BE BUILT BY ESTONIANS WITH SOME FINNISH AND POLISH INPUT HAS NOT EVEN BEGUN.

5. PRAGI WAS ASKED ABOUT "NEW SYSTEM OF PLANNING AND ECONOMIC STIMULUS" BEING FOLLOWED BY 51 CONSTRUCTION ORGANIZATIONS, ACCORDING TO LATEST STATISTICAL REPORT (ABOVE). AS HE UNDERSTANDS NEW SYSTEM, IT INVOLVES PROVIDING EACH CONSTRUCTION BRIGADE WITH OVERALL PLANNING

TARGETS BASED ON "OBJECT" TO BE BUILT, GIVING WORKERS
BETTER FEEL FOR COST OF PROJECT, AND PROFIT THEY WILL GET
FROM PLAN FULFILLMENT. PLANNING CYCLE IS ALSO EXTENDED
FROM ONE TO TWO OR THREE YEARS, ALLOWING FOR MORE RATIONAL
DIVISION OF RESOURCES, AVOIDING END OF YEAR INEFFICIENT
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"STORMING" OF PLAN GOALS.

6. IN ELABORATE, HALF-FINISHED YACHTING CENTER, WE
WATCHED INEXPERIENCED ESTONIAN OFFICIALS UNDERGOING TRAUMA
OF RUNNING FIRST TRIAL RUN FOR OLYMPICS, INVOLVING WEEK-
LONG REGATTA FOR SIX DIFFERENT CLASSES WITH 25 COUNTRIES
REPRESENTED, INCLUDING 20 AMERICAN SAILORS. LOCAL
OFFICIALS CONSIDERED IT MIRACULOUS THAT ELECTRIC TYPE-
WRITERS COULD EVEN WORK UNDER WATER FLOODING THROUGH HALF-
FINISHED ROOF; AND AMERICAN I.B.M. EXPERT INSTALLING COMPU-
TER CENTER WAS BEMUSED AS HE PROVIDED ADVICE TO WORRIED
SOVIET COUNTERPART, WHO KNEW EVEN LESS ABOUT YACHTING THAN
HE DID. BORDER GUARDS SEEMED MOST NERVOUS OF ANYONE AT
THIS INFUX OF FOREIGNERS SAILING ACROSS BALTIC IN THEIR
OWN BOATS.

7. VISIT TO IMPRESSIVE ART CENTER IN MODERN MYSTERMAE
SUBURB ILLUSTRATED UNCERTAINTIES OF BEING MODERN ARTIST
EVEN IN ARTISTICALLY ADVANCED ESTONIA. CENTER PROVIDES
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WORK SHOPS FOR SOME 27 LEADING ARTISTS, WHO RECEIVE
COMMISSIONS ON HONORARIUM BASIS FROM COMMITTEE RECENTLY
SET UP BY "ARS COMBINE," TO WHICH THEY BELONG. FAMOUS
SCULPTOR ULO OUN COMMENTED CRYPTICALLY, "I AM DOING MORE
REALISTIC WORK NOW," IN CONTRAST TO SOME EXCELLENT ABSTRACT
SCULPTURES IN HIS STUDIO. WORKS BY J. VINT AND LEIS MELLE
INDICATED SOME OF THEIR WORKS WERE ON DISPLAY FOR SALE AT
GALLERY IN TOWN, BUT INQUIRY AT ARTISTS FUND REGARDING
LOCATION OF THIS GALLERY DISCLOSED THAT MELLE'S WORKS WERE
STANDING AGAINST WALL, WITH YOUNG MEN IN CHARGE OF FUND
INDICATING THEY HAD NO IMMINENT PLANS TO SHOW THEM BEFORE
PERHAPS ANNUAL OCTOBER EXHIBITION OF ESTONIAN ARTISTS.
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MELLE MEANWHILE WAS OFF TO MOSCOW IN HOPE OF RECEIVING
VISA TO VISIT NETHERLANDS.

8. VISIT TO PRESUMABLY BEST OF SOME 13 SUPERMARKETS IN

TALLINN SUBURBS (NONE YET WITHIN CENTER OF CITY) WAS IMPRESSIVE FOR ITS MODERNITY, AND SELECTION OF FOOD. THERE WAS FAIR CHOICE OF FISH, INCLUDING OCTOPUS, SUBSTANTIAL QUANTITIES OF FATTY PORK (ALLEGEDLY ESTONIA'S FAVORITE MEAT) FOR UNDER 2 RUBLES, SOME BEEF, HAMBURGER PATTIES FOR 50 KOPECKS AND NICE CHICKENS FOR 2.20 RUBLES. ASKED ABOUT REPORTED SHORTAGES OF VEGETABLES, PRAGI CLAIMED THAT PROBLEM IS NOT SO MUCH LACK OF VEGETABLES AS HOW TO GET THEM IN FROM FIELDS. BECAUSE OF COLD, RAINY SPRING, FARMERS ARE FACED WITH CONFLICTING PRIORITIES, WHETHER TO BRING IN VEGETABLES OR FODDER FOR CATTLE, WITH BOTH CROPS READY FOR HARVESTING AT PRESENT TIME. IN MANY CASES, THEY HAVE EVIDENTLY CHOSEN FODDER, IN LINE WITH EXHORTATIONS IN LOCAL PRESS. OUTLOOK FOR GRAIN IS FAIRLY GOOD, 27-30 CENTNERS PER HECTAR.

9. YOUNG PROTOCOL OFFICER, PETER PAKHLA, WHO COMPLETED TRAINING AS LAWYER AT TARTU UNIVERSITY LAST YEAR SAID HELSINKI AGREEMENT IS STUDIED IN TWO COURSES: LAW AND SCIENTIFIC COMMUNISM. FOREIGN MINISTRY HAS 7 EMPLOYEES, BUT ONLY TWO IN PROTOCOL-CONSULAR SECTION TO PROCESS, INTER ALIA, 4,000 VISAS, MOSTLY FOR FINLAND AND SWEDEN (INCLUDING SEAMEN). LOCAL FOREIGN MINISTRY TRADITIONALLY HAS OFFICER ASSIGNED TO HELSINKI, STOCKHOLM, AND OCCASIONALLY OTTAWA EMBASSIES TO HANDLE ESTONIANS.

10. PERHAPS IT WAS DIFFICULTY OF ORGANIZING USEFUL PROGRAM, THE COUPLE OBVIOUSLY PLANTED AT OUR TABLE ONE NIGHT, OR TIGHT CONTROLS OVER ANYONE ENTERING VIRU HOTEL DURING

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EVENING, BUT MY WIFE AND I WERE MORE AWARE OF MAIL FIST
INSIDE VELVET GLOVE ON THIS VISIT TO TALLINN. BUCHANAN

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SAS ID: 1738311
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NOTES FROM ESTONIA
TAGS: OTRA, ECON, EQIP, TECH, SCUL, UR
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